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College to require new teachers to have knowledge of special needs and First Nations education

VANCOUVER – College Council passed new regulations Friday that will require all applicants for certification as a teacher in BC to receive specialized training in teaching special needs and aboriginal education before they are granted a certificate. These changes will be phased in by the nine teacher education programs in British Columbia by September 2012 when the requirement comes into full force.

"This change is about making sure the teachers of the future have the academic background and the tools they need to meet the demands of the education system moving forward," said Mike Trask, Chair of the College. "In order to better meet the needs of learners with special needs and to ensure that the reality of the First Nations experience is reflected in classrooms for all students, this was a necessary move on the part of the College."

Prior to this bylaw change, there was no mandatory requirement for specific education in this area, but many applicants pursued courses in both special needs and First Nations studies within their academic coursework and some programs already required it. In addition, many long-time practising teachers have taken specialized professional development in these areas.

"The First Nations course will lead to a better understanding of the needs of First Nations learners and improve the education system in BC overall," said Tyrone MacNeil, President of the First Nations Education Steering Committee. "It will promote respect and reconciliation between First Nations and Canadians in BC and Canada."

"Many teacher education programs already have mandatory special education and First Nations coursework. The College believes the phase-in period to September 2012 is sufficient to ensure those remaining universities that offer these courses as an option can fully integrate these courses into their programs so that their graduates can be certified by the College upon the University's recommendation," said Kit Krieger, Registrar of the College.

The College is the self-regulatory body for educators in BC. The College's responsibilities include licensing, disciplining and setting standards for educators. The College has 75,000 members. Members of the College include classroom teachers, principals and vice-principals, district administrators and superintendents.

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